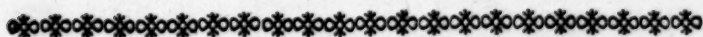


The Variance between Real and Nominal
Christians considered; and the Cause of
it explained.



A

S E R M O N

On MATTHEW x. 35, 36.

By H. VENN, A. M.

Late Fellow of Queen's-College, CAMBRIDGE.

JOHN xvii. 14.

*I have given them thy Word; and the World hath hated them,
because they are not of the World, even as I am not of the
World.*

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. TOWNSEND, at the Corner of
White-Friars, in Fleet-Street.

M.DCC.LIX.

The Various Real and Nominal
TO ALL
CHRISTIANS of every DENOMINATION

Who find themselves

Persecuted, opposed, or censured

FOR THEIR

Unteigned Love, and zealous Obedience

Gospel of our only Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

This plain Duty



A D D R

With his earnest Prayer to GOD

it may be made sufficient to comfort and
establish their Hearts
By their

Affectionate Prayers

J. O. of every Common Faith

J. Venn

TO ALL
CHRISTIANS of every DENOMINATION,
Who find Themselves
Persecuted, opposed, or censured,
FOR THEIR
Unfeigned Love, and zealous Obedience,
TO THE
Gospel of our only Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ:
This plain DISCOURSE is humbly
A D D R E S S E D,
TOGETHER,
With his earnest Prayers to GOD,
THAT
It may be made Effectual to comfort and
establish their Hearts.

By their

Affectionate Brother,

in our Common Faith,

Clapham,
June 20, 1759.

H. VENN.

TO ALL

CHRISTIANS OF EVERY DENOMINATION,

WHO ARE THINLY

PERSECUTED, OPPRESSED, OR CONFINED,

FOR THEIR

UNSHAKED LOVE, AND ZEALOUS OBEDIENCE,

TO THE

GOVERNMENT OF THE FREE AND FAITHFUL KING OF GREAT BRITAIN,

THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY

24 00 62

OF THE

WILL OF HIS MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY KING GEORGE THE FOURTH,

IN THAT

HE HAS BEEN PLEASED TO MAKE PROVISION FOR THE

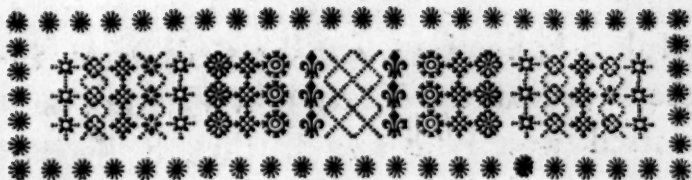
RELIEF OF HIS SUBJECTS,

BY ACTING

IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS


IN OUR COMMON FAITH,

H. VENN.



MATTHEW X. 35, 36.

I am come to set a Man at Variance against his Father, and the Daughter against her Mother, and the Daughter-in-Law against her Mother-in-Law, and a Man's Foes, shall be they of his own Household.

HEN the Lord Jesus Christ was sending forth his Apostles to preach the Gospel, he forewarned them of the fierce Opposition and evil Treatment they were to meet with. And for the Admonition of all his Disciples to the End of the World; he informs us, that after bloody and national Persecutions of his faithful People should cease, his Name and Gospel should prove the Occasion of great and frequent Dissentions, even amongst nearest Relations. And least it should be supposed there could be no Cause for such Dissention, given by him who was himself, the Prince of Peace, and who re-
B quired

quired a meek and peaceful Temper from all his Followers; our Lord declares, in the Words of the Text, that Variance and Hatred would be found, though by no Means the Design, yet the certain Event of his coming.

Think not that I am come to send Peace upon Earth, i. e. such a Peace as subsists between Sinners who mutually approve each others Infidel Opinions, and perfectly agree in the Pursuit of Vanity and Delusion. *I came, says our Lord, not to send Peace, but a Sword,---i. e.* a Doctrine quick and powerful, like a Sword, to pierce the Hearts of Sinners, and separate them from their beloved Lusts; and in Consequence of this, to make a Division, even amongst dearest Friends, and nearest Relations: *For I am come to set a Man at Variance, &c.*

For our due Improvement of this Scripture, I shall shew,

I. In how many material Points the Lord Jesus Christ is the Cause of Variance amongst dearest Friends, and nearest Relations.

II. Prove it the necessary, though melancholly Consequence of such Variance, that a Man's Foes, such a one, who loves,
and

and receives Jesus Christ, as his Lord and Saviour, must be those of his own Household, when they will not receive him also.

III. Offer something of Advice to both Parties, who find this Scripture fulfilled in in their own House, and amongst their own Relations and Friends.

I. This Variance, which I am going to describe, is not the simple Effect of submitting to the Truth, as it is in Jesus. It arises wholly from the vile Affections which naturally rule the Hearts of Men, filling them with Hatred to the Purity and Power of the Gospel, and that Manner of Life, it indispensably requires. The Blame therefore of this Variance, is wholly to be charged on the Corruption of human Nature, and the unruly Wills and Affections of sinful Men.----For was the Gospel cordially received and universally obeyed, the very Name of Strife and Division would be heard of no more. On the contrary, while it is either scornfully rejected, or professed with Hypocrisy and Partiality, so long in every Town, and in every private Family, there must be Variance between those who are unfeignedly his Disciples, and those who are at best but false Professors of Reve-

rence and Love to him. It must be so, because every real Disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, receives from him so much spiritual Wisdom and Understanding, as to be habitually, and deeply impressed, with a Sense of his own Condition in this present World. That he is a fallen, corrupted, sinful Creature ; standing infinitely in need of Pardon and Redemption, which must be obtained before he dies. That he has but a short Time (how very short, the Almighty Lord of Life only knows) to continue in the World.

That a Work of much Difficulty, but infinitely greater Importance, must be accomplished in this Life ; the Reconciliation of a Heart, naturally averse to God, to the Love of his Wisdom, Purity, and Will.

Every one who truly believes what Christ teaches him, must believe most assuredly, that if he dies before this great and gracious Change is wrought in him, he cannot see God, or be meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light ; that his Soul must be lost, that immortal Soul, the Salvation of which, is the one Thing needful ; and for the

the Sake of which, Life itself is continued to him.

Add to this, that the Lord Jesus Christ calls all his Disciples to Watchfulness, against the many Snares and Temptations, which are ever near to hurt, and ready to destroy. He warns them against Conformity to vain Customs;---against seeking Honour and Esteem among Men;--against being luke-warm and formal as the Multitude;---and gives them frequent Notices, that a subtle, malicious Spirit, is their implacable Adversary. These Things are firmly believed by every real Disciple of Jesus Christ.

II. Now what Variance and Contrariety in Sentiments, must this Light and Wisdom set up in their Minds, occasion between them and their nearest Relations, and dearest Friends; who are altogether unaccustomed to consider themselves as Sinners, and Strangers upon Earth. Who, if they know indeed their Spirits are immortal, yet feel nothing of their Depravity and Fall from God, perceive no Necessity of an inward universal Change; and so far from looking upon themselves as having here no continuing City, promise themselves Length of Days; and will by

no Means admit the Thought, that the World lieth in Wickedness, and that, before a Man can please God, he must actually renounce its most favourite Maxims, and act in direct Opposition, to its prevailing Manners.

Is it possible, even to conceive a wider Difference, a greater Disagreement in Judgment, than must necessarily subsist, between Persons so opposite in the Views they have of themselves, and the World they inhabit?

But was the Variance only in Opinion? Did these Truths float in the Brain, it would be little and inconsiderable: Since if Men *act* as we do, it is self-evident, that no Set of Notions, however spiritual, or seeming to exalt the Glory of God, can put Men in a better State with Respect to him, till they are practically improved: But as the Understanding of the real Disciples of Christ are enlightened, so are their Will and Affections influenced and changed. They not only acknowledge the Salvation of their Souls to be the one Thing needful, but actually apply themselves with a considerable Degree of Ardour and Concern to obtain it. They read the Word of God with all Reverence and Attention, to get Instruction

tion in this most important Work. As they believe no Evil so great as *Sin*, no Misery so insufferable as the Sense of God's Displeasure against them; they daily in earnest pray to be delivered from it, and to be made Partakers of that Faith in the Son of God, to which Pardon and Acceptance are expressly promised. When they have happily obtained this inestimable Mercy; it inclines them to be more sober, vigilant, and circumspect, that their Behaviour may adorn the Gospel: That not only their Dealings with others, may be irreproachable, but even the general Tenor of their Conversation, such as may make themselves and their Friends, more wise, zealous, and spiritually-minded. Hence they have Pleasure, in confirming each other in the Persuasion, that all outward Advantages, though so proudly boasted of, and vehemently pursued, are empty and unsatisfying, without the Love of God is shed abroad in the Heart. With Joy they speak of the Light, the Power, the manifold Grace that is prepared for, and *now* conferred on, all that believe in the Name of God's only begotten Son. Their Delight is daily in the Perfections, the Promises,

mises, and the Victories of the Redeemer; and in recounting the rich Advantages they enjoy, who depend on him alone, above those who trust in themselves, as having either Strength or Righteousness.

These Topics, in vast Variety of Views, for ever charming, and for ever new, are the constant Subjects of Conversation amongst those who desire to keep a lively Sense upon their Minds, of their own Christian Character, and Obligations to God.

Now what Variance, in the constant and favourite Subjects of Discourse, must this necessarily occasion, in a Family, or amongst Friends and Relations, whose Conversation is perpetually of another Strain; who, after having paid the worthless Tribute of a few formal Prayers in the Morning, favour not, all the Day long, the Things which be of God, but those Things which be of Men. Who keep out of Sight, no less than if they were the Lies of mercenary Priests, or the Disgrace of human Nature, all the glorious Truths of Redemption. Whose vain Discourse, has no other Tendency than to fill the Understanding with false Conceptions of
the

the Value and Importance of Things temporal; than to maintain the Lawfulness, nay Expediency of Living in the *moderate* Gratifications of Pride, Sensuality, and Covetousness.

In Discourse therefore, and the Choice of agreeable Subjects for Conversation, no two fiery Patrons of opposite Factions; no Bigots of different Sects, can so widely vary from each other, or be so unfit to join together, as the real and pretended Christian. For what the one relishes as the very Savour of Life unto his Soul, as a Foretaste of the Language of Heaven, as the only Subject to be insisted on without Weariness or Satiety; the other esteems insipid, if not surfeiting; grows angry with, as hypocritical Cant, and enthusiastic Jargon. No Sincerity or Uniformity of Conduct, can make him endure it, or induce him to believe it; the Overflowings of real Love to, and Delight in the Blessed God. Whilst, on the other Hand, neither the most sparkling Wit, nor the most perfect good Humour; nor all the Accomplishments of Breeding, can make the Christian, take Pleasure in that
Worldly

Worldly Conversation, which is at best unprofitable, and often agrieving the Spirit of God.

But in Points still more important than either Opinion or Discourse, does this Variance between real Christians, and those who profess themselves only such, discover itself. *i. e.* In their Pleasures, and in their Designs. When real Christians have discharged their Worldly Business, *to which they apply themselves with diligent Application as their Lord has commanded them,* their Pleasure and Delight, is to retire to converse with the blessed Book of God : To enter into the Meaning and full Import of the glorious Character God therein gives of Himself. To meditate on the Promises of his Grace, on the Method of his great Salvation, and by this Means to grow in Grace, and in the Love and Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Then to pour out their Complaints before God, to confess every defiling Temper or Thought, and implore more purifying Grace : Or at other Times when they have more *Leisure* from their Occupations, the real Christian's Delight, is to be with the Saints that are in the Earth, and such as

ex-

excel in Virtue, old experienced Travellers in the Paths of Life, from which they would never stray. ---- In conversing with such, they taste the Pleasures of Friendship in their highest Perfection, and find that as Iron sharpeneth Iron, so doth the Countenance of a Godly Man, his Friend.

How contrary to all this Practice, is the Way and Fashion of those who call themselves Christians, but inwardly are not so: Their leisure Hours, if they have a Turn for Reading, are wholly taken up with foolish and impertinent Books: Histories of Scandal or Intrigue; at best in getting Acquaintance with Characters and Transactions of little real Benefit to their own Minds: Or in the Works of some Poetic Fancy, void of every Spark of hallowed Fire. If they love not Books, they get rid of their Time by Haunting the Play-House, or the Tavern, by Gaming, or Playing at Cards, simply to amuse, or by Visiting to hear the Follies and Miseries of every Neighbouring Family related, and the dull tiresome Account of every trifling Occurrence since they met last.

But what compleats the Variance between real Christians, and those who have

no

no more than the Name, is the great End for which they live, and the Design of all their Actions. The one seek not the Praise of Men, sacrifice not to themselves, by indulging their natural Inclinations, coveting Money and Power, as if to be rich, and to be great were the same Thing, as to be wise and happy. But this is the constant and great Design of which they never lose Sight, to hear the Word of God, believe and do it; they know they were not redeemed with corruptible Things as Silver and Gold, but with the precious Blood of Christ, and on this Account are glad to present themselves in all the Ways of Obedience and Duty, a living Sacrifice, acceptable unto God: So that whenever their Lord, shall come, they may be found of Him in Peace, without Spot, and Heirs of Eternal Glory.

With far other Design do all nominal Christians live and act. SELF is their Centre and their End; and the Enjoyment of Things temporal, their best, their only Happiness. They say, come on, let us, buy and sell, and get Gain: Add Field to Field, and House to House. Let us take our Ease, eat, drink, and be merry, for To-
Mor-

Morrow shall be as this Day, and much more abundant.

From hence it is undeniably evident, in how many most material Points there must necessarily be Variance between those who only take upon them the Name, and just submit to the Formalities of Christian Baptism, and Christian Worship, and those that are Christians altogether.

In order to teach us how great this Variance is, the Scripture challenges us to point out any Thing of Importance, in which they can be of one and the same Mind. *What Fellowship hath Righteousness with Unrighteousness, or what Communion hath Light with Darknes, or what Concord hath Christ with Belial, or what Part hath He that believeth with an Infidel.* 2 Cor. vi. 15. 16. Their Contrariety in Judgment, Inclination, and Practice is universal, and such as will allow of no Agreement.

By Consequence, wherever the true Faith of Christ is, it will make a Division even amongst nearest and dearest Relations, the melancholy Effect of which will be that a Man's Foes, the Man who is governed by the Wisdom and Spirit of Christ, shall be they of his own Household, if they
are

are not in like Subjection to the Gospel. For who are to be accounted by Way of Eminence a Man's Foes? Not they who keep him down in the World, for he might rise only to greater Ruin, and to increase the Depravity of his Soul: Not they who revile and slander his good Name, for this affords a noble Exercise for Faith, till the Omniscient God shall make his Innocence clear as the Light, and his just Dealing as the Noon-Day. But those Persons, in the Judgment of God, are accounted a Man's Foes, who use all their Endeavours, too often, alas! with terrible Success, to make him ashamed of the Son of God; or afraid to be counted one of his Disciples. Who use the Ascendancy they retain by Means of Duty, temporal Interest, or Affection, to make him return back to the secure and unbelieving World, from which he has come out, as Lot from Sodom.

Now in this principal Point, every real Disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, will find those of his own Household, who have not received the like precious Faith, his Foes. He shall meet with cold Looks, and hard Speeches, even from those whose Approbation next to that of God,
and

and of his own Conscience, he would most rejoice in. He shall be pointed out as the Godly One of the Family, who has got a new Religion of his own, who thinks it a Sin to laugh, and that we must be always like Saints in Effigy, lifting up our Hands in Prayer, or be damned. In Families where Gentleness and Humanity prevail, all the soft Arts of Persuasion shall be used to bring such a one off from religious Singularity, and to convince him there is no need of living in a Manner so opposite and distasteful to the World, to approve ourselves faithful to G O D. But if these Methods fail, the severe Punishment of a Parent's Displeasure must be expected. And where God has permitted it, it has been often most severely felt, by People in a State of Dependance, and especially amongst those of low Degree. Nor are we to wonder at this, since the Reason of such Behaviour is plain and obvious. All Men love to have their own Way of thinking, and Manner of Life approved by others: They are never more displeased, than when their conduct is condemned, as full of Folly and full of Sin; than when they are told that, though Custom and Fashion are
now

now altogether on their Side, the Truth of GOD is great, and will at last prevail against them and overthrow them; therefore it is at the Peril of their Souls, to continue in their present State. Now though there may not a Syllable of this be said in Words by the real Christian, yet every formal Professor, and merely nominal Christian, cannot help inferring as much; for if, says he to himself, he does not esteem us as Counterfeits, why does he abstain from our Ways as Filthiness? *Why is his Life now so different from ours, and his Ways of another Fashion, and he himself clean contrary to our Doings.* Wis. ii. 12. Every Christian is made therefore, as it were to reprove the Thoughts of the Wicked, and those who dissemble in their double Hearts with GOD. These Sinners are Proof against the most searching Sermons of faithful Ministers, which they seldom hear, and they can excuse themselves in not obeying the Word of GOD, by supposing there are none who come up to that Rule of perfect Righteousness. But the Example in their own House of a Christian, is the living efficacious Sermon, which is always convincing them of the mighty Power obtained by true Faith,
and

and what an excellent Life it can support with an even Tenor. This makes Men, though unwillingly, perceive that amidst very much of empty and loud Profession, very much of external Devotion, without any real Religion, there are some who have the Grace of God, and his Spirit dwelling in their Hearts, and who do not only differ from the World in Sentiments, but despise its Vanities, and overcome all its Enchantments. And where this Evidence does not lead Men to implore the same Grace, it must make their Consciences sometimes trouble them with painful Misgivings, least after all they should be condemned as Hypocrites. And therefore, till they can themselves be brought in earnest to set about leading a Christian Life, they are enraged at those, however near and dear to them on other Accounts, who by their whole Life and Practice, at once prove what Power is given unto them, who sincerely seek it; and whose Example silently, yet most feelingly, upbraids them, for not having obtained the same Power for themselves.

Thus we see plainly the true Ground of the Variance between real and pretended Christians.

The Bitterness with which in many Instances it is carried on, Experience fully proves. In what highly-favoured Corner of the World are they to be met with, who study to fulfil their Baptismal Vow, in earnestly renouncing the Devil and all his Works, the vain Pomp and Glory of the World, with all the covetous Desires of the same, and the carnal Desires of the Flesh, so that they will in no Degree follow or be led by them, and yet find no Variance between them, and their Friends, and Relations? Who are thus Christians in Spirit and in Practice, and are not often urged to prove like Paul before Festus, that they are not mad, but act steadily upon the Principles of Soberness and Truth?

The Time would fail me, to relate the several Ways in which Censure, Opposition, and Hatred, discover themselves against those who will carry the Matter of Religion farther than abstaining from gross Sins, and customary going to Church, even to the putting away Childish Pastimes. And who carry it so far as to think it is neither necessary nor innocent for Christians, for Candidates for an eternal Heaven, allowed but a short Time of Probation, to consume
a third

a third Part of their wakeful Hours, in what can neither inform the Understanding, nor amend the Heart. No sooner doth only such a Disagreement from the general Method of spending *Leisure-Time* become known, than a Rupture is opened between the Christian and those about him. And in Proportion as he remains resolute and determined to be governed only by God's Word, to exercise Himself unto Godliness, and no less to condemn a careless unconcerned Temper about Things Eternal, than open Wickedness, and profligate Manners. No sooner is this done, then, whosoever he is, he shall see this Scripture was written for his Instruction, and is full-filled with Respect to himself. Neither is this a Peculiarity in the present Age: Even soon after the national Establishment of the Christian Faith, and its Triumph over Pagan Idolatry, St. Austin, thus expresses himself on the Subject.

“ It is a dangerous Temptation you are
 “ exposed to, by the Generality of loose
 “ Christians, insulting over the few strict
 “ Ones. And begin, saith he, whosoever
 “ thou art that hearest me, to live as a
 “ Christian, and see, if you are not up-
 “ braided for it, even by Christians,

“ but in Name only, not in Life and
 “ Manners. For not without Cause is the
 “ Cross fixed in your Forehead as the Seat
 “ of Shame-facedness, to teach a Christian
 “ that he should not be ashamed of the Re-
 “ proach of Christ.” Psalm 30. Conc: Ter.
 And whilst Human Nature continues un-
 der the Power of the same evil Principles,
 and Corruptions, the very same Enmity
 will and must discover itself against the
 Spirituality and Life of true Christianity.
 What remains therefore, upon this Sub-
 ject, is to offer with all Modesty and Hu-
 mility some Advice, to both Parties who
 find this Scripture fulfilled in their own
 House, and amongst their own Relations
 and Friends.

III. You who meet with Persecution,
 Opposition, or Censure, because you will
 live in all Obedience to the Gospel of Christ,
 be jealous over yourselves that all your
 Behaviour is of a piece with your Pro-
 fession. Remember, you live amongst those
 who will, and have a Right to examine and
 sift your Conduct. And who expect to find
 you shamefully defective in some Points
 of plain and necessary Duty, whilst you
 are all on Fire with Zeal for singular
 Opinions.

Opinions. Who expect that you will overlook what is incumbent on you, to conform to, in your Place and Station of a Child or Servant, as what has nothing to do with the spiritual Life. Whenever this is the Case, you give just Cause for Censure and Opposition; you create the Variance you complain of in a great Measure by your own Partiality in obeying the Gospel, which gives this Rule never to be forgotten, *Children obey your Parents in the Lord, for this is right.* Ephe. vi. 1. *Servants be obedient to them that are your Masters, with singleness of Eye and Good-will, doing Service as to the Lord, and not to Men.* Whilst therefore, on the one Hand you are stedfast and immoveable, not to spend your Time in Idleness, or give any Countenance to foolish Talking and Jestings: Whilst you are invincibly resolute to bear Testimony by your Life and Practice against that Forgetfulness and Contempt of God, which almost universally prevails; be equally careful that you excel in the Performance of all relative, social Duties; and as far as the Law of your God will permit you, as far as you can without grieving the Spirit of God, and bringing Detriment to your Soul; study to

be courteous and obliging. Thus prove to all about you, that it is not Affectation and Self-conceit (which alas! too often is the Case) that occasions the Variance; but a wise uniform Purpose, in every thing to be ruled and governed by the Word of God. By thus exhibiting the Beauty of Holiness, the Heart of bitter and violent Opposers have been stolen away, and their Love by Degrees won, even against their Will.

Be careful in the next Place to Watch against Enthusiasm, which is sure to make a powerful Assault to get Possession of your Mind, as soon as ever true Christianity is entertained. For as that is entirely a Spiritual Service, begun, carried on, and compleated, by the Influence of the Holy Ghost; the Transition is very easy, into absurd and disgraceful Notions of being led and moved by the Spirit, in Affairs of no Moment to the Soul's good. Hence some are perpetually talking in a most nauseous Manner, of particular Intimations and Suggestions, how they are to act, in such indifferent Matters, as whether they shall walk or sit still, receive Benefit or not from particular Conversations; and in a thousand Instances of the most trifling Kind, to urge in Vindication of their own
Way

Way and Will, that they must follow their inward Teachings. Now the Censure and Opposition excited by such Behaviour, is not for Righteousness Sake, but for Enthusiasm. The Work of the Spirit of God, and his Inspirations, are given for other and more Divine Purposes. Not to supersede the Use of Reasoning from the Word of God, and applying the general Rules there laid down, to your particular Circumstances, much less to give Directions which are not to be found in God's own most Holy Word. No, *The Fruit of the Spirit*, which is given and dwells in all them that are Christ's, *is in all Goodness, and Righteousness, and Truth. The Fruit of the Spirit, is Love, Joy, and Peace*, arising from a sense of Pardon and Acceptance with God. Power over Sin, Gentleness, Meekness, Temperance: And this Fruit produced within, by the Operation of the Holy Ghost, through the Word of God and Prayer. By bringing forth this Fruit, you will experience all the Variance the Text mentions, whilst nevertheless, your Warrant in Scripture is clear and undeniable. On the contrary, by giving Heed to sudden Impulses, you are in the greatest Danger of

being swallowed up of Vanity, and of treating the written Word itself, but as a dead Letter, in Comparison of your own Light, and inward Suggestions; in Danger of opening the Gates for all Delusions to come in like a Flood, under the most venerable Name of Spiritual Religion, till you, yourself, become like a Wave of the Sea, driven too and fro, and tossed, by every Wind of Doctrine.

Further, if you have Parents or Masters over you, remember, Admonition is not the Duty of *your Place and Station*, otherwise than by your Example, but the contrary. Preserve yourself unspotted from the World, and its evil Manners and Maxims, and it is enough--a great Work indeed, and so you will apprehend it, if you are earnest and hearty in it, as you ought. That Forwardness towards Rebuke, and rectifying of Superiors, which feels like Zeal, is often nothing better than Pride and Self-conceit, which find this Way to screen themselves, and manage undiscovered. Let your Perseverance in Meekness, Humility, and fervent Love to God, speak continually, for his Honour, and the Excellency of his Gospel: Thus you will be safe; and
in

in due Time, when either your Situation is altered by the Providence of God, from your present State of Subjection; or you may be asked the Reason of your singular Behaviour, you will be useful to the Souls of others.

Another Piece of Advice you would do well to regard, is never to make what you suffer from unconverted Friends and Relations, the Subject of your Conversation; for besides, that this may indulge a secret Vanity and Self-Love; it is often the Cause of fomenting the Variance, and increasing the Opposition. In this Case therefore, as the Prophet Micah speaks, Chap. v. 7. *Trust ye not too easily in a Friend, put ye not Confidence in a Guide; keep the Door of thy Mouth; but with him, say, I will look unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my Salvation: My God will bear me.* Be much in Prayer, to him, in whose Hands are the Hearts of all Men. Intreat him to undertake for you, and to support you under all Opposition, till your Friends and Relations are reconciled to that Wisdom which is Foolishness to the World; till they also are brought to the
Know-

Knowledge of the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent.

And when you thus live in entire Subjection to the Gospel, giving no just Occasion for Blame and Persecution; be not at all disturbed, with all the Reproaches that fall on you, for Christian Singularity. Because when Profaneness and Formality prevail almost universally, Singularity is your highest Wisdom, no less than your bounden Duty.

When to live in all holy Obedience to God, is stigmatized; happy are those, who, on this Account, are most opposed and ridiculed. It is impossible for God to put a greater Honour upon you, than to give you an Heart, wholly to oppose and withstand not only the Infidel, and the Scoffer, but all who honour God with their Lips, whilst their Hearts are far from him. Nor can we suppose any will be found more beloved of God, nor receive from his free Grace, a brighter Crown of Everlasting Glory, than those who in the Flower of Youth and Beauty's Pride, gave unto God the Offering of a free Heart; were Confessors, for the Purity and Power of his

his saving Truth, amidst the Strife of Tongues; under the Frowns and Scoffs of dearest Friends, or most revered Relations; like Noah's Dove, harmless and innocent, seeking the Ark of God, without one Friend to encourage, one Earthly Counselor to direct; the World, all the while, like the deep Water, threatening to destroy them. Be of good Chear, thou young Soldier of Jesus; thou shalt accomplish thy Warfare; thou shalt be more than Conqueror. He, that himself endured the Contradiction of Sinners, and was not of the World, as thou art not of the World, is touched in a peculiar Manner, with a feeling of thine Infirmities; he will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able to bear. And *marvel not, that the World hateth you*, for ye know that it hated your Leader and Commander, before it hated you; *if ye were of the World, the World would love its own; but because ye are not of the World, but he hath chosen you out of the World, therefore the World hateth you.*

I proceed now in the last Place, to address myself to you, with all Deference,
who

who take the Offence, and are at Variance with your Children, on Account of their Resolution to live Godly in Christ Jesus. Surely you ought to forgive them this Wrong; nay, to be thankful, that whilst so many Parents are bewailing the extravagant Follies of their Children with aching Hearts, doubting whereto these Excesses may grow, yours give no Offence, but by fearing and loving God, more than the World about them. Now before you trouble them farther on this Account, examine and prove yourselves, whether you receive the Word of God, as what it is in Deed and in Truth; the only Rule of Life, and what must judge you and your Children, at the all-decisive Bar: Where Fashion and Custom, so far from being admitted as a Plea, will not dare to appear in the Sinner's Defence. If you have the least Doubt of this, be frank and open in confessing to your Children, your dreadful Apostacy from the Christian Faith.

But if you are not so far lost and given over to a reprobate Mind; if you are indeed persuaded, the Word of God is Truth; can you condemn your Children as
extra-

extravagantly singular, and mad with Religion, whilst they are in no Point particular, but such as that Word of Truth and Righteousness, makes absolutely necessary? No, if you believe, that those, and only those shall inherit Glory, who are in Heart and Life, what the Scriptures require : If you believe this, you will be the first, and the most earnest, to encourage, to urge your Children to separate from the World, in the Manner of spending their Time, in the Subjects of their Conversation; in their Aim and Designs. You will impress with all the Weight your Authority gives, that most alarming Scripture; and do all that lies in you, to rivet it upon their Minds;

strive to enter in at the strait Gate; for wide is the Gate, and broad is the Way that leadeth to Destruction, and many there be that go in thereat, because strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.

On the Contrary, if you are the Cause of turning them out of that strait and narrow Way, into which, by the Grace of God, they are brought : What severe Accusations of Conscience would you feel, should
 GOD

GOD take your Children from you in the Blossom of Youth. Would it not cut you to the Heart, to hear them on the Bed of Languishing, and in the Views of approaching Death, tell you? That the bitter Accusation of their Conscience, is more than they can bear; for having conformed to the World, against their better Judgment, in Compliance with your Request; that they are in horrible Dread, lest having been ashamed of Christ and his Words, through the Opposition they met with at Home, he should be ashamed of them, when they most Want his Favour. Were you to see a Child of your own, in such a Conflict in its dying Hour, say, what but would avail all your deceitful Fondness, to raise it in the World, or make it agreeable to every body?

May God, by his Grace and Holy Spirit, deliver all you, who are Parents, from this Misery. Make you perceive that it is your bounden Duty, and rejoice in it as your Privilege, to feed the Lambs committed to your Charge, even your own Children. May you shew the Wisdom and Strength of your Affection for them, by
your

your Concern for their better and immortal Part ; by animating them to fight the good Fight of Faith, that they may lay hold of Eternal Life.

So may you reasonably Promise yourselves Comfort from them whilst living, and if, as in the Course of Nature is most probable, they are your Survivors ; you will look upon them in your last Hours, with increasfing Joy. You will think with solid Satisfaction, of their Deliverance from the Love of this World, which you will then esteem as nothing ; you will close your Eyes with the most comfortable Prospect, a dying Parent can have before him, next to that of his own Everlasting Salvation ; the Prospect of meeting your Children at the Right Hand of God.

F I N I S.

24 00 62